The wildflower season early estimates were for a short one in 2007. Fortunately we've had members out scurrying about to catch a glimpse of the short display this year. Read on for some of our members' reports of what were some rewarding trips around the state. It's still not too late to catch some of the Alpine blooms just coming on now so get out there and return with some impressions and/or photos for the next issue! Thanks to all our contributors for this issue.

Butterfly Valley Botanical Area
by DeAna Spiess

There wouldn't be much doubt that if I asked people around the world what you would expect to see at Butterfly Valley Botanical area, most would say "Butterflies". Given that the valley is anything but a lepidopteran heaven, how did it get its name? From the valley's two-winged shape. That's something for the pitcher plants to chuckle about on nights around the butterfly roast. Although we saw a few butterflies flying and captured by the common round sundew plants.

On a pleasant weekend in June several CNPS members and I set out on California Highway 70, which crosses east-west through the Plumas National Forest. Roughly midway, near the community of Keddie, we traveled an unposted turnoff onto County Road 417, a narrow asphalt road that turns to gravel after about a mile and a half. Continuing another mile on the gravel we took a left turn onto a Forest Service road that led southward through the botanical area. At first all we saw were woods dominated by ponderosa and sugar pines. We located a large pull-out off the dirt road at which one of our travelers had stopped on a previous trip. We walked down a dirt path back through a slightly swampy meadow. Then we sighted our first cobra or pitcher plants (Darlingtonia californica), growing in standing water along with sedges, rushes, and other wetland plants. This boggy habitat, best termed a fen because it is fed by water seepage from the bottom of the adjacent hillside, parallels the road for a hundred feet or so.

To much delight we identified many flowers and plants. The main highlight vegetation in Sweetwater Marsh were cobra plants with green-and-maroon flowers, two types of sundews, including the round-leaved one common in the fen, and various wildflowers—among them wild hyacinth, bog saxifrage, yellow monkey flower, Pariah's yampah, sheep parsley, and a species of Saint-John's-wort. Some other wildflowers were pearly everlasting, crimson columbine, white-flowered bog orchid, Camas, Lady's slipper, shooting star, Plumas alpine aster, western sneezeweed, and the highly toxic western water hemlock. Along the edge of the bog and upland of the bog the main shrubs we saw were Labrador tea and bog bilberry with star tulips, checker bloom, wild iris, snub pea, sweet pea, corn lilies, wild roses, plus many others.

I would highly recommend this trip. Roads are not well marked. Visitors should check in first at Quincy's Mt. Hough Ranger Station. Butterfly Valley Botanical Area, Mt. Hough Ranger District (39696 State 70, Quincy; www.r5.fs.fed.us/plumas or 530/283-0555)

History Tidbit...

In the early 1850s, mining operations and the old mining town of Butterfly Valley occupied the area. When the mines panned out, the town of Butterfly Valley was abandoned and grazing and logging operations took over. The Galeppi brothers increased grazing in the area by bringing their cattle into the area in the early 1900's. At about this same time, the Murphy Lumber Company began railroad logging, which was expanded by Quincy Lumber Company, the purchaser of the Murphy Lumber Company. Although logging operations stopped in 1950, grazing continued until the Butterfly Valley Botanical Area was designated a botanical preserve area in 1976.

For Stockton sub-chapter information about any events, trips, memberships, article/photo submissions and other issues please contact either:

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For members receiving hard copies of the newsletter who would like to view full color versions of this newsletter and additional color photos, go to the website: http://www.sacvalleynps.org/ and navigate to the “Stockton Sub-Chapter” section.
Travelogue II:
by Dr. Mark Brunell

I next headed back to the I-5 and drove south to Hwy 89. I traveled east to the "town" of Bartle, and then took National Forest Route 15 north to route 49, then proceeded north into the Medicine Lake Highlands area through the "Modoc Volcanic National Scenic Byway". These forest highways go for miles through uninterrupted forest, with patches of broken-up lava here and there. Occasionally, large flowering Western Choke-Cherry (Prunus virginiana var. demissa) could be seen on the roadside. A few miles south of Medicine Lake I encountered a sign for the "Jot Dean Ice Cave", and a small parking area. This seldom-visited cave is large in diameter with easy access. It is a small lava tube made of basalt, and the inner areas have beautiful ice formations including patches of a clear ice floor. On the short trail from the parking area to the cave was found some color in form of Cycladenia (Cycladenia humilis var. humilis), a purple-flowered member of the Dogbane Family that I had never even heard of before. There was more purple from the Ash Beardtongue (Penstemon cinioola; ID provisional), and white from the Pinemat Manzanita (Arctostaphylos nevadensis). Pussypaws (Calyptridium umbellatum) was also seen flowering low to the ground. A common shrub in the area, although not flowering, was the Rubber Rabbitbrush (Chrysothamnus nauseosus), which was seen again and again throughout the trip.

Medicine Lake, which resides at 6600 feet, is a caldera in the center of the Medicine Lake shield volcano. The Medicine Lake area was covered with lots of thick snow however the roads had been plowed and two campgrounds were open. The campgrounds were about one-fourth full of visitors (it was Memorial Day weekend). The campground has a very sparse understory owing to fireweed gathering by visitors, and a canopy of Lodgepole Pines. Few other species were visible, and nothing was in flower. The American Robin (Turdus migratorius) and Steller's Jay (Cyanocitta stelleri) were present. (cont'd. page 3)
Travelogue II (cont’d from Page 2)

I camped the night, and in the morning continued north on the 49 to reach the Medicine Lake Glass Flow, which is a large pile of obsidian boulders north of the lake, spanning over a mile in length. The ground was clear of snow but no flowers were present. I discovered the sporangia of a plasmodial slime mold on a rotted piece of pine wood. These tiny structures are very hard to find and I have personally seen them less than four times in my life. I moved further north to the south entrance of Lava Beds National Monument. As I approached, Pacific Ponderosa Pine and Antelope Bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata* var. *tridentata*) became abundant, the latter species flowering profusely. Just north of the entrance is the parking area for Mammoth Crater, which was the origin of the lava that flowed north to cover what is now the monument area. There was a small parking area and a short trail to an overlook. Many species were present in this location. The Western Juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) and Desert Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*) were the dominant trees. Red was provided by Wavy-Leaved Indian-Paintbrush (*Castilleja applegatei* subsp. *pinetorum*), yellows by Least Tarweed (*Hemizonia minima*), Blazingstar (*Melitaea dispersa*), and Sulphur-flower Buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum* var. *nevadense*), whites by Cascade popcornflower (*Plagiobothrys hispidus*) and Holboell’s Rockcress (*Arabis holboellii*), and purples and pinks by Dwarf Purple Monkeyflower (*Mimulus nanus*), Blue-Eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), and Yellowstain Collomia (*Collomia tinctoria*).

I then moved further north to the visitors center of the monument and saw a fantastic collection of Modoc Indian and U.S. Army artifacts from the Modoc Wars period, and a lot of basic information on the volcanic history of the area and of Modoc Indian cultural information. Just to the south of the visitors center is the Cave Loop area, which is a loop road that passes through a large number of lava tube caves. The dominant woody species present in this area were the Desert Mountain Mahogany (in fruit), Rubber Rabbitbrush, Antelope Bitterbrush, Western Juniper, Bitter Cherry (*Prunus emarginata*; in flower and fruit), Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), and Desert Gooseberry (*Ribes velutinum*; in flower and fruit). Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) was an occasional tree, bearing flower buds. Color was provided by many herbaceous species, including pinks, blues, and purples from Low Beardtongue (*Penstemon humilis* var. *humilis*), Threadleaf Phacelia (*Phacelia linearis*), Western Blue Flax (*Linum lewissii*), Spreading Phlox (*Phlox diffusa*), Mt. Lassen Fairyfan (*Clarkia lassensis*), and Threadleaf Daisy (*Erigeron filifolius*), yellows from Coiled Locoweed (*Astragalus curvicaulis* var. *curvicaulis*), Longleaf Hawksbeard (*Crepis acuminata*), Yellow Salsify (*Tragopogon dubius*), Tansy

Mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*), Blazingstar, Sulphur-flower Buckwheat, and Woolly Groundsel (*Packera cana*; formerly *Senecio canus*). Widespread but not yet in flower was the Silverleaf Phacelia (*Phacelia hastata* var. *hastata*). At the mouth of caves could be found Fragile Fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*) and Lanceleaf Figwort (*Scrophularia lanceolata*). The cave interiors had an understandably poor flora. I moved north to the Schonchin Butte area, where Skull Cave is located. At the entrance of this huge cave was found Fern Bush (*Chamaebatia millefolium*), which closely resembles the familiar Mountain Misery (*Chamaebatia foliolosa*) but is much taller, and Lanceleaf Figwort.

My last stop in Lava Beds National Monument was Captain Jack’s Stronghold, on the north end of the monument, just south of Tule Lake. This is the "fortress" used by the Modoc warriors to defend themselves from the U.S. Army. The place has piles of basalt with furrows, caves, corridors, etc., making a very complex environment with lots of microhabitats. Common species not in flower were the Pale-leaved Serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*; with fruits) and Davis’ Knotweed (*Polygonum davisi*). Flowering species included Scabland Penstemon (*Penstemon deustus* var. *pedicellatus*), Threadstalk Milkvetch (*Astragalus filipes*), Desert Sage (*Salvia dori*), Interior Rose (*Rosa woodsii* var. *ultramontana*), Threadleaf Daisy, Branching Phacelia (*Phacelia ramosissima* var. *eremophila*), and Hoary Nettle (*Urtica dioica* subsp. *holosericea*).

The trip continued north, out of the monument, to Oregon (Klamath Falls, Chiloquin, and Crater Lake), and back down into California. Approximately 8 miles northeast of Weed on Hwy 97 was a burned area of chaparral supporting a carpet of purple, yellow, and white wildflowers. I did not stop to look but I could tell that the purples were beardtongues. This particular spot had more flowers than any place I have seen this year. An added benefit at this spot is the wonderful view of Mt. Shasta and Shastina to the southeast.

The season is not yet over but is coming close. Who knows what flowers lurk in the late summer!
We walked across O'Shaughnessy Dam and zigzagged our way through a dark, muddy tunnel. Emerging into the light we found ourselves on a trail that meandered along the cliffs above the waters of Hetch Hetchy Reservoir. Yerba Santa, Manzanita and Lupinus albifrons flanked the path, and butterflies flitted overhead among the Black and Canyon Live Oaks. Not interested in growing erect, the canyon oaks often leaned out over the trail perpendicular to the hillside, providing welcome shade in the midday heat.

Towering above us, huge granite cliffs stood sentinel as reminders that Hetch Hetchy Valley was once the smaller twin of our famed Yosemite Valley before being flooded in 1923 to provide water and power to the Bay Area.

A cove of giant Woodwardia ferns, Bigleaf Maple and Alder watered by a stream trickling down from the majestic cliffs offered cool respite to reflect on our hopes for Hetch Hetchy Valley's restoration. Several recent studies have shown that it would be technically feasible to relocate the reservoir downstream with little or no loss of water. The trail soon led us through a "shelf" or "terrace" meadow filled with Brodiaea and Yarrow among the grasses - a glimpse of what the Hetch Hetchy Valley floor once looked like before it was flooded...and a hint of what it one day might be again. When we arrived at Tuolumne Falls with its "silvery scarf burning with irised sun-fire," (in John Muir’s words) we were too late. The seasonal falls had dried early this year. It was hard to be disappointed though, since we could see and hear Wapama Falls around the corner "roaring and thundering, pounding its way like an earthquake avalanche."

We vowed to return earlier next spring, but in the meantime we had to agree with Muir that Hetch Hetchy "is a grand landscape garden, one of Nature's rarest and most precious mountain temples."

We will continue to work for its restoration.

For more information, go to www.hetchhetchy.org

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NATURE CENTER COORDINATOR

Congratulations to CNPS member James Rexroth on his new appointment as Nature Center Coordinator at Oak Grove Regional Park. James comes to the Center from Micke Grove Zoo where he worked for the last 25 years. Along with animal care duties, James aided the Education Department by giving tours, doing outreach programs, instructing docents, and teaching kids' summer classes on herpetology (the study of reptiles and amphibians). In addition to his herpetological expertise and a longstanding Audubon affiliation, James has landscaped one of the most attractive local native plant gardens at his home in Stockton.

James' love of nature and fulltime presence at the park are greatly appreciated by volunteers who look forward to seeing the flora and fauna of the Center expanded during the next decade. The featured Great Valley species of our Native Plant Garden may even get some new foothill and coast range neighbors!

Good luck James.
May the Flora be with you.
It was record participation to date as five CNPS enthusiasts (Grover, Floyd, DeAna, David and myself) left Lake Alpine on the two-mile trek to Duck Lake. Up the hill through the shaded woods, the trail was bordered by yellow, white and blue violets. On the open, sunnier hilltop, we were treated to golden Pretty Face, and as we dropped down toward Duck Lake royal blue delphinium dazzled our eyes.

At this elevation of around 7,000 feet, several of the conifers were replacing their lower elevation relatives. Jeffrey Pine (Pinus jeffreyi) with its vanilla-scented bark replaced the lower elevation Pinus ponderosa. Western White Pine (Pinus monticola), whose cones dangled at the tips of its branches like fingers, replaced the lower elevation Sugar Pine (P. lambertiana). California Red Fir (Abies magnifica) and White Fir (Abies concolor) were both present in this ecotone. The Red Fir with its bluish-green needles was slowly replacing the greener-needled White Fir of the lower elevation and we were able to distinguish each species by color. Lodgepole Pine (Pinus contorta ssp. murrayana), whose range begins around 6,000 ft., was also prominent in the wetter areas.

At this time of year, the floristic highlight of the trip was the penstemon (Penstemon rydbergii) exploding in the meadow grasses at the west end of Duck Lake. Myriads of magenta-purple blossoms surrounded a collapsing log cabin where we had seen a yellow-bellied marmot on a previous trip.

After delighting in the lakeshore’s treasures of butterflies, bistort and frogs, Grover, DeAna, and Floyd headed farther along the trail toward Spicer Reservoir. They returned shortly, DeAna proudly displaying in her water bottle two catfish they had rescued from a drying pond. Then back to Lake Alpine they went ahead of David and myself so Floyd could get in a quick kayak trip while I slow-poked up the hill.

As evening quieted the winds on the water, dinner at Lake Alpine Lodge topped off the delightful day.